

Bobbed Hair, Scant Dress and a Woman Problem in China

"Sing-Song Girls" Set Styles Which Are Decidedly Extreme

Femininity on the Streets in the Big Cities Is the Wonder of the Rustics From the Outlying Districts

By Nathaniel Peffer

PEKING, August 28
O the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: In a letter of instruction to me as correspondent you remind me that your readers are interested in more than the public aspects of China. They would know also of the people, their customs, their manner of living. If correspondents were to write to their newspapers as they do to their friends their articles would be more readable, you say aptly. And by way of suggestion you state some of your own curiosities: What kind of clothing do the Chinese wear? What of their cost of living? What of the woman question, if there is a woman question?

If there is a woman question! Are not the Chinese human? Male and female, did He not create them, too? They have women. Have they a woman question?

This morning, in an interval when I had weaned of the elucidations by Shen Hsien Sheng, my preceptor, of the mysteries of the distinction between lao and lao, after I had said lao meaning "old," lao being not lao but lao—all of which, being concerned with the bane of "tones," you do not understand—this morning, as I say, Shen Hsien Sheng regaled me in my weariness with a tidbit from the gossip among the pedagogues. It concerns Yang Hsien Sheng, a colleague.

Yang Hsien Sheng has taken unto himself a bride. In the custom of his people he has brought her into the home of his own family, as another branch of the ancestral tree. Yang Hsien Sheng, or Mr. Yang, and Yang Hsien Sheng, or Mrs. Yang, are of New China now. They have gone to the mission school; they can talk English, a hesitating, painfully correct English; they are self-conscious in their new ways and proud of them. Yang P. P., or Mother-in-law Yang, is of Old China old. She knows only the precepts of the sages, the Five Obligations there enjoined on her sex.

Old Chinese Bride's Place Is Very Much in the Home

Thus it is decreed that the good wife remains at home in modest seclusion. When her husband's friends come she withdraws to an inner chamber. When he goes out she stays at home to prepare food and tea and comfort against his return. If she goes out it must be only with female members of the family, or if, on rare occasions, with her husband, then walking discreetly and with proper modesty a little in the rear. To no male save of the family must she talk. And never must she depart from that proper reserve which deems feeling or betray before others any sign of affection for her husband. To her mother-in-law she must yield strict obedience as the need to age and wisdom and the fulfillment of the iron exactions of the most sacred of codes, that of filial piety. For the Chinese bride severs all relations with her own family on her wedding day. Thereafter she is a member of her husband's family. It is to his parents she owes filial piety; it is at the tablets of his ancestors that she must worship. Her place, in short, is in the home, far back in the home.

Thus it is decreed, but Mr. Yang and more especially Mrs. Yang, have gone to the mission school. They have learned of the ways of the West; more particularly Mrs. Yang learned of the ways of the Western woman. Like others of her kind and generation, she has begun to chafe under the myriad thousand-weights of the Chinese woman.

Mrs. Yang would go out with her friend Mrs. Chung to the public garden for tea and gossip. Mother-in-law Yang forbids, it is not for a young married woman to go about the streets accompanied only by another young married woman. Mrs. Yang and her husband go to a mission school party together, walking side by side and even arm in arm. It has come to the ears of Mother-in-law Yang that they have been seen at such occasions speaking to each other with familiarity. Mother-in-law Yang forbids; it is not proper for a wife to attend mixed social gatherings; it is vulgar to flaunt the marital relationship in the face of the public; it is presumptuous for the wife to act before others as her husband's equal. Mrs. Yang has been seen speaking to other men at such gatherings. Mother-in-law Yang forbids; the wisdom of the sages is evidence such conduct is immoral. Further and yet more important, Mrs. Yang disputes the dicta of Mother-in-law Yang on matters of the home. Mother-in-law Yang cries out at the blasphemy. In her mind is scandal, in her heart is indignation, on her lips is tart comment. The ancient proprieties have been outraged. Her dictatorship has been challenged.

Mr. Yang Remains Neutral At Price of Twofold Wrath

In the house of Yang matters have come to heated tension. Mrs. Yang has appealed to her husband for support as her wifely due in newer times. Mother-in-law Yang has appealed to her son to fulfill his filial duty by impartial judgment and eternal custom. Mr. Yang with solemn discretion, without judgment, torn betwixt his sympathies with his wife's ideas and his unwillingness to hurt his mother as well as challenge her position and provoke volcanic wrath. He remains

neutral. He is upbraided by Mrs. Yang for his lack of husbandly feelings. He is upbraided by Mother-in-law Yang for lack of filial piety. In the mean time Mr. Yang takes his meals and resorts from domestic debate in the Hall of Longevity and Happiness, where his fellow pedagogues and cronies foregather for gossip and the roast Peking duck with mantou and beancurd sauce for which that restaurant is properly famous. To his cronies he has unbosomed himself, seeking counsel, and thus the tale comes to me.

I submit: Mr. Yang has a woman question. And in China are many Yangs. They are wherever the new learning and the opening of communication with foreign lands have brought

conflict with ancient tradition and taboos, which is wherever there has been new learning and wherever foreign ideas have penetrated. Rebellion stirs in the younger womanhood; a faint stirring yet, but enough to make the rafters of many a Chinese home ring with shrill and tearful debate of at least some aspects of the woman question.

Defiant of the ban of silence laid on them by tradition, young ladies are voicing their grievances—mutinous, heretical grievances—undreamed of by their grandmothers, in the public press. They have taken to "writing to the editor." I glean the following revealing bit from the angry remonstrance of one such young lady in the columns of an English language daily in Shanghai:

"The liberty of correspondence is a legal privilege of a citizen, protected by law except in time of war. Now it is very strange that girls in school cannot mail letters until they have been strictly examined by the superintendent of the school or the school head.

Such cases may be seen in the old style Chinese school, but to my great dissatisfaction many of the mission girls' schools, even in Shanghai, also do the same thing.

"I have tried to find out the reason why they follow such policy. One friend tells me it is because some of the mission schools are in charge of old maids. . . . Do they think that love is a crime or a sin or something impure or shameful, as the conservative class of Chinese think?

"Still, some people protest that love letters will lead to some matrimonial complications, for some Chinese girls are early betrothed by their parents, and if they are not carefully guarded from the love of other young men their families will suffer much. But do they think that marriage without love, as dictated by the parents, is a happy marriage and will last long? Surely not. Then why should a girl sacrifice herself and her life to be the bride and the wife of one whom she does not love?

"Marriage for love is a thousand times better than that of no love, or in other words, where there is no love there is no marriage, and the early engagements should be broken by either party if one feels dissatisfied. This is the lecture the teacher should give to every girl! And if they examine the letters of a love nature how may a marriage of love be brought about?"

Ask the parents of this youngster or her future husband whether there is a woman question. Love! Legal privileges! Conservative class of Chinese! Matrimonial complications, broken engagements, letters of a love nature! When for more centuries than the protesting young lady has years girls have been given in marriage by their parents, through the discreet intermediations of the middleman and with the orthodox number of feasts and consultations of fortune tellers and have seen their husbands only after the ceremony. And no more likely than the moon disappearing at the command of the baying dog has been the possibility of even a demur from the bride. True, she has always had the recourse of an ex-post facto protest by way of suicide, a recourse many Chinese women have taken, but the law of the parent

has been divine. She has done as she has bidden; she has been arrayed in the dazzling red bridal costume; she has been borne to the home of her husband's family in the red sedan chair screened heavily against human scrutiny, and then has stood up all day and bowed respectfully while family friends who had come for the feasting came up to inspect and comment audibly on her physical properties and the bridegroom's good or ill fortune. And, the feasting over, she has kowtowed to her parents-in-law, at sunrise each morning brought her mother-in-law her tea with ceremonial bowings and silently obeyed her orders with meekness and decorum. And now love letters, marriage by her own choice, broken engagements and letters to the paper. Ask the young woman's father whether he has a woman question. Ask him who for decades, like his ancestors for as many centuries before, has thundered from Siam the divine law for his household and now is said by a girl with hair scarcely put up; ask him. To him it is not a question, nor yet an inscrutable enigma. It is a cosmic cataclysm, a shaking of earthly foundations.

Or ask the husband of my neighbor across the hu-tung, Mrs. Ch'ou. It is not only among daughters that mutiny rumbles. Faint declarations come also from the higher ranks from wives. Mr. Ch'ou, prosperous dealer in the Five Metals on the busy Ch'ien Men Ta Chieh, was bidden recently to a feast in honor of the opening of the Eternal Prosperity Shop, dealers in bamboo matting. When the conversation waxed lightsome over the twenty-ninth course and the tiny samshu cup there came Petal of Plum Blossom to sing of legendary heroes and deeds of gallantry. Young, recently come from Soochow, fair of face and decorous of demeanor, she is a lesser belle of the sing-song girls. Mr. Ch'ou was in responsive mood. Petal of Plum Blossom sang prettily, poured his tea even more prettily. He summoned her to the next feast he

attended, he called—and with the balancing of his accounts at the Dragon Boat Festival \$400 was deducted for the purchase price of Petal of Plum Blossom. In a shining black ricksha with four brass lamps, thus denoting éclat, she was borne to the house of Ch'ou to be sequestered as concubine.

Mr. Ch'ou was but acting in exercise of his heaven-born right as a male. A concubine is the inalienable right of those who can afford one, and as many as they can afford. The wife submits silently, eking out vengeance in subtleties of vocabulary and lashing of the successful rival with the tongue. As for her husband, it is the will of the lord and master; so be it.

Not so Mrs. Ch'ou. Mrs. Ch'ou energetically voiced a veto. She did more. She gave Petal of Plum Blossom twenty-four hours to clear out. Mr. Ch'ou demurred. I have it from my house boy, who has it from the boy of Mrs. Ching, another neighbor, who has it from the boy of Mrs. Ch'ou, that at the end of four hours Mrs. Ch'ou paused for breath and began on the second reason why she wouldn't stand for it. At the conclusion of the elaboration of the fourth reason late that evening, enforced, it is said, by strenuous demonstrations, Mr. Ch'ou fled to what goes



THE top picture shows the *Gai-club*, where Chinese women talk over their rights. The coolie woman at the right, with her feet stylishly bound, likes to dress well, and her gown, turban and jewelry are all up to date. The little sing-song girl in the center, with the latest in collars, sets the fashion for her sisters who do not perform in cabarets, and the costumes of the gorgeous beauty on the right are soon imitated by the girls who tread the Fifth Avenues of the Flowery Kingdom. At the left are mission girls busy over fancy work which is to beautify clothes, of course.

has been divine. She has done as she has bidden; she has been arrayed in the dazzling red bridal costume; she has been borne to the home of her husband's family in the red sedan chair screened heavily against human scrutiny, and then has stood up all day and bowed respectfully while family friends who had come for the feasting came up to inspect and comment audibly on her physical properties and the bridegroom's good or ill fortune. And, the feasting over, she has kowtowed to her parents-in-law, at sunrise each morning brought her mother-in-law her tea with ceremonial bowings and silently obeyed her orders with meekness and decorum. And now love letters, marriage by her own choice, broken engagements and letters to the paper. Ask the young woman's father whether he has a woman question. Ask him who for decades, like his ancestors for as many centuries before, has thundered from Siam the divine law for his household and now is said by a girl with hair scarcely put up; ask him. To him it is not a question, nor yet an inscrutable enigma. It is a cosmic cataclysm, a shaking of earthly foundations.

Or ask the husband of my neighbor

Ancient Custom Rudely Shocked In Sweep of Western Ideals

Even the Tyrannical Mother-in-Law Cannot Keep the Chinese Bride From Her Newly Discovered Privileges

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verse ratio between quantity of hair and degree of freedom.

That is no small matter. It is an indication of no small stage in "advancement" of Chinese parents that their girls are in school at all. Least anybody be tempted to racial self-complacency, let it be remembered how short is the span of years since the same was true of Europe and America. That a Chinese girl can read and write is itself a sign of high progress in her parents, but that she comes back to the ancestral tablets minus what is for Chinese woman also her crowning glory and all that, and is moreover the sensation of the tea-houses and the moral dolorous viewings with alarm over the heresies of these degenerate days—if that bring too great a strain on parental tolerance and consequent hysterical scenes at family councils, what wonder? Report has it there is uneasiness even in the breast of that staunch liberal and apostle of change, Tsai Yuan-pai, chancellor of the government university and father of one of the shorn.

Around education whirls much of the tempest of the times. In the last few months co-education has been introduced in the university in Peking. For the first time in China's countless generations boys and girls are sitting together in classrooms. It is as yet a timid, self-conscious grouping. It is not yet co-education as we know it in America, where it is more co-educating, but the inevitable complications have already set in.

The elite are scandalized. Minatory resolutions are passed by outraged elders. The press teems with solemn pointings to the ancient proprieties, with abuse, with ridicule and even with grave charges of immorality. Girls have been seen shamefully talking in school buildings with boys to whom they are not even betrothed. The halls of learning tremble. And for all that insistent young girl students in other cities also are demanding the privilege of imbibing knowledge by the side of the male.

Men of many climes long have sung the beauty and modesty of the Chinese woman's costume, its unchangeableness and freedom from fashion's whims. That is becoming now an ancient lay, a fond memory. Beauty there is yet; harmony of delicate colors, silk and satin of exquisite texture and design. But as for the other qualities—the Chinese woman also is becoming revelatory and diaphanous. She, too, is wearing them higher and thinner. In her case the "them" is trousers, not skirts.

In the streets of big cities like Shanghai, where the modern touch is more evident, rustics freshly come from the country round about to view the wonders of the New World there to be found can be seen at the busy corners of the Great Horse Road, marvelling not so much at the motor-cars, the trams, the high buildings and the luxurious shops as at the femininity that threads in and out on shopping bent. It is the newest and most startling of the phenomena of the New World.

Costs fit skin tight and are cut short. Silken trousers that once were screened on the proper Chinese lady by a wide skirt now are unshielded before the public gaze. Where once, moreover, they descended below the ankle, they cease abruptly at not so far below the knee. And such as they are, they are perilously and shockingly thin.

Is it to be wondered if the sage grandfather, autocrat of his household by the patriarchal system, learned in the classics, rigid in the prescribed proprieties, Confucian maxims on his lips, is it to be wondered if he takes one look at his granddaughter, faints, revives and issues stern orders—orders that in these irreverent days are dismissed with a toss of the head as who should say, "the old fogey"? The domestic schisms that result need no description to the middle-aged American reader. What next? Has become a relevant question here, too.

All the girls are wearing it that way is the unanswerable argument in defense here as well. They are styles now. Having an unobtrusive male eye and not having the bills to pay I had not noticed it, but my middle-aged Chinese friends tell me it is now short sleeves and now long sleeves, now high collars and now low collars, now coats with this and now coats with that, all necessitating frequent change and more bills. And it is an interesting reflection on the kinship of all colors of the sex, yellow as well as white, that the changes are dictated from the same social level everywhere.

Let a sing-song girl whose exploits are known to all the young men about town—there are such—turn up at a fashionable theater with one lilac stocking and one navy blue stocking below the knee-length silk trousers and two months later that young lady is crushed by humility whose stockings also are not one of lilac and one of navy blue. And parents may fume and parents may threaten, but lilac and blue they remain until another sing-song girl dons them magenta and burnt onion. And I have no doubt the fuming parent or husband is the same man who when at the feast whispers delicate compliments to the sing-song girl at his side on the lovely color of the stockings she wears and whispers to his fellow banqueters isn't she a peach. One touch of male nature make the whole world—whatever you like.

Anyway, believe me and my Chinese friends, there is a woman question in China. About 200,000,000 of them, the population being 400,000,000.

Taxes Give Stinnes Full Control of Italian Company

ROME, September 1.

IF THE Fiat Company had not been taxed \$30,000,000 as excess war profits, the German commercial group headed by Herr Stinnes, with the Banca Commerciale as its Italian representative, would not have obtained control of the shares held by the Fiat of the Alpine Montan Gesellschaft, a company having its roots just at the Italo-Austrian frontier. Deputy Chiesa has brought up the question in the House of Deputies in an effort to blame the Fiat company for selling out its majority of stock to the German group.

Signor Agnelli, the head of the Fiat company, admits that, in spite of the drawback of lack of raw material and coal, he might have managed to hold on to the control of the works had it not been for the appalling taxes which had to be paid. It was on his initiative that the shares in the Montan company had been bought. He had no help from the government, which, though it professed to be interested in the operations, made no concessions in regard to the matter, though when the Fiat company took over the management of the foundries they were obliged to keep only one going, and that with wood fuel, as coal could not be obtained.

The mines which formerly supplied the coal to the Gesellschaft lie between Czechoslovakia and Silesia, the two governments of which refused to supply the necessary fuel. At that time the reason was unknown, but recent

events show that the Stinnes group prevented the supply from being imported into Italy, as they were then negotiating for the concession of these mines.

Despite difficulties the Fiat was determined to hang on. It could have done so had it not been for the taxes amounting to \$30,000,000. An Italian, Castiglione, offered to buy the shares, and as by law there was no necessity of a permit from the Italian government the transaction was put through without delay, the Fiat needing the money. All the transactions were arranged without the issuing of shares, as the property being in Austria, the script could not be exported.

Stable Door Is Shut After The Horse Has Been Stolen

It is the old tale of shutting the stable door after the horse has been stolen, and Parliament now is very much wrought up over the idea of a second German industrial penetration in Italy. Deputy Eugenio Chiesa, in speaking of the matter, said:

"This operation is but one link in the huge net which will in time paralyze the economic life not only of Italy but of all central Europe and the East, as this group of steel magnates in Germany are willing to intrigue and stoop to every vile maneuver to obtain control of the steel market of the world. They have penetrated into political life, and strive to paralyze the life of this nation. This organization with Swiss and German capitalists at its

head, started its campaign in February of this year, and its operation at present is centered against the industrial and banking interests of our country. Hugo Stinnes, the only representative of the old industrial financial group, has at his command a newspaper trust, which includes newspapers not only in Italy but throughout central Europe and the East. These newspapers, in various parts of Europe have but one object, to foment disorders against law and order, to prevent the return of industrial peace. While these disorders cause trouble in other countries Germany will be able to overcome its temporary disability."

It was immediately after the occupation of the factories that German agents were able to buy shares in the Fiat and several chemical societies at a low figure. Of these shares they have not the majority, but naturally they hope with a continuance of trade depression that the various societies will sell out to the German group.

The output of the Montan Alpine foundries was the greatest of any in central Europe. For many years the Fiat company has tried to obtain shares, but only since the war was this possible. Of the 500,000 shares, 182,000 were bought by the Fiat, 60,000 by a group of shipbuilders in Trieste, 30,000 belonged to the Austrian government, while a syndicate of Austrian banks held the remaining shares for the Italian group, if they wished to buy.

The history of the Italian control of

the Foundries dates back to 1918 and 1919 after the armistice, when General Segre was head of the Italian Military Mission, before the resumption of diplomatic relations with Austria. Through the general the Fiat group were enabled to obtain the 182,000 shares in the Alpine Montan company, as well as the right to buy sufficient shares to form the majority of the stock. The company decided to issue new stock, in order that Austrian financiers should continue to hold a majority of the shares, but diplomatically, through the good offices of the Marchese della Torretta, now Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Austrian government prevented the directors of the company from doing this, and the Fiat remained in control.

The Fiat group, which included Signor Agnelli and Signor Guinold, started their new enterprise at a great disadvantage, as they lacked coal, and no amount of pressure on the part of the Italian government proved successful in obtaining coal from Czechoslovakia or the Silesian district.

The Fiat were in dire distress owing to the disastrous condition of their factories in Turin. They were assessed, not only for their profits during the war, but also for the profits which they were not earning, owing to the occupation and the after effects of the Communist rising during last September. Their only chance was to sell their shares to some one who would pay them their price. At first they strove to sell their shares to Ameri-

can financiers, but failed, and finally they negotiated with Signor Castiglione for this sale to a Swiss bank, which, in turn, sold to Stinnes.

"What I ask," continues Signor Chiesa in Parliament, "is what the government intends to do in the future to prevent a similar action in the case of Italian money invested abroad, on which the investors have paid no taxes. How the Banca Commerciale became interested in the affair was due to a side deal, by which the bank acquired 40,000 shares at a much lower price than that paid by the Italian financiers and which they held until the Fiat shares were taken over by the Stinnes group.

Stinnes Mines Will Supply Coal So Long Needed

"At present, according to the president of the company, Rothhaller, 250,000 of the 500,000 shares are held by the Stinnes-Banca Commerciale trust, together with the Trieste shareholders. By arrangement with the Stinnes mines plenty of coal will in future be supplied to the Alpine Montan foundries. At present three furnaces are at work and it is unlikely that the other nine will be started before 1922, as the railways in Austria are in such a deplorable state that transportation is difficult. Without any doubt Herr Stinnes will be president of the company and direct its operations.

"Stinnes, with his fortune of 2,000,000,000 marks and his strong person-

ality, is a man to be feared. One can hardly realize the disastrous consequences to Italian industry and commerce if the Stinnes campaign continues. The steel trade in the East will be lost to us. We should learn from France what to do. France, when the Stinnes combine tried the same game with her, ordered the sequestration of the shares. Had we followed France's suggestion that the 200,000 shares of the Alpine Montan should have formed part of the reparations, we to-day would have been better off.

"Now," concludes Signor Chiesa, "by the action of our government who failed to allow these shares to form part of the reparations due to us, but strove to benefit our steel industry, this foundry will provide iron to the Jugo-Slav foundries while our own steel work at Portoferraio and other parts are idle from lack of raw materials."

Italy Scraps Zeppelin

From a Special Correspondent
MILAN, Aug. 30.—This year Italy

has received two Zeppelins from Germany. One of them was destroyed through a hurricane and the second one, renamed Ausonia, has been giving a lot of trouble owing to the constant repairs needed.

Signor Gasparotto, War Minister, proposed lately at a Cabinet meeting that the airship should be broken up, as its upkeep was costing Italy 50,000 lire daily.



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